

Testimony in SUPPORT of Budget Article 12 Section 8d Perinatal Doula Services
And H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act

Rhode Island House Committee on Finance, Wednesday April 14, 2021

To Chairperson Abney and members of the House Committee on Finance,
My name is Evan Sargent and I live in Middletown, Rhode Island. I am in strong support of Budget Article 12 Section 8d and bill H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act. This budget article and bill are crucial to improving the health and safety of pregnant individuals, particularly Black and Brown families. A doula is a nonmedical professional trained in childbirth who provides emotional, physical, and informational support to a person who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. A doula's purpose is to help people have a safe, memorable, and empowering birthing experience. This bill has been crafted collaboratively by doulas, birthing families, community organizers, doula advocates, and legislators, I support a bill that reflects the ongoing input of these key stakeholders.

- Doulas increase satisfaction with birth experience
- Lead to 23% fewer C-sections
- 9% drop in use of pain medication
- 31% less use of Pitocin (used to induce labor)
- 40 Min shorter labors
- Increase breastfeeding success
- Reduce medical spending by eliminating unnecessary procedures and avoiding complications that can occur before, during, or after birth
- Reduce premature births and newborn illnesses
- Increase black maternal health by providing quality and consistent care in labor and delivery
- Reduce health disparities for Black and Brown pregnant people
- Decrease Postpartum depression

I am a white woman with three kids. I gave birth to all my big babies naturally. I didn't have a doula but I had the enormous privilege of having many resources, tons of education, options, and means to advocate for myself to raise my chances of having a healthy and satisfying birth experience.

I believe every woman has the right to advocate for herself in the delivery room, and to have support in doing so. And most of all, every woman has the right to safety and an environment that's free from bias based on her race. Black and brown women are bearing the brunt of the mother and infant mortality crisis in the US. As a passionate mother, I am working with the Women's Fund of RI Policy Institute to fight this crisis and make real change. Having a doula, and the education and resources that come along with her, to support a mother throughout the entire birth process and help her to advocate for herself, can truly change the numbers.

In closing, I urge you to support Budget Article 12 Section 8d and bill H5929 The Doula Reimbursement Act.

Sincerely,

Evan Sargent
Middletown, RI